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AFFAIRS IN CUBA.

SPEECH

OF

HON. CHARLES W. FAIRBANKS,
OF INDIANA,

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Thursday, April 14, 1898.

WASHINGTON.
1898.

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SPEECH
OF
HON. CHARLES W. FAIRBANKS.

Mr. DAVIS, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, reported the following joint resolution:

For the recognition of the independence of the people of Cuba, demanding that the Government of Spain relinquish its authority and government in the Island of Cuba, and to withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters, and directing the President of the United States to use the land and naval forces of the United States to carry these resolutions into effect.

Whereas the abhorrent conditions which have existed for more than three years in the Island of Cuba, so near our own borders, have shocked the moral sense of the people of the United States, have been a disgrace to Christian civilization, culminating, as they have, in the destruction of a United States battle ship, with 266 of its officers and crew, while on a friendly visit in the harbor of Havana, and can not longer be endured, as has been set forth by the President of the United States in his message to Congress of April 11, 1898, upon which the action of Congress was invited: Therefore,

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

First. That the people of the Island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent.

Second. That it is the duty of the United States to demand, and the Government of the United States does hereby demand, that the Government of Spain at once relinquish its authority and government in the Island of Cuba and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters.

Third. That the President of the United States be, and he hereby is, directed and empowered to use the entire land and naval forces of the United States, and to call into the actual service of the United States the militia of the several States, to such extent as may be necessary to carry these resolutions into effect.

Mr. FAIRBANKS said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I shall detain the Senate but briefly in the consideration of the great question that is pending before us. I would, indeed, be quite content to leave it where it has been left by the splendid addresses of the Senator from Massachusetts [Mr. HOAR] and the Senator from Delaware [Mr. GRAY]. I am slow to add any word at this moment lest it be discordant with the patriotic and splendid sentiments uttered by those distinguished Senators—sentiments clothed in classic diction and fervid with exalted patriotism.

Mr. President, I have come to the Senate as I would seek a sanctuary in the contemplation of this great issue. I, sir, have not been for either peace at any price or war at any cost. I have been steadfastly for peace if it could be maintained honorably, and for war if the national dignity and honor required it.

The problem which is presented to us is one of the greatest gravity, one which invokes our most deliberate, patriotic judgment. Many times during the last three-quarters of a century our relations with Spain have been the subject of deep concern and profound embarrassment. The proximity of the Island of Cuba to our shores, our intimate commercial relations with it, are such that we are instantly and sensibly affected in a greater or less degree by its misgovernment.

The island stands sentinel over the Gulf of Mexico, the entrance to the Mississippi River, and lies in the direct course of our commerce via the Isthmus of Panama. We have been and shall always continue to be concerned in the character of the government which maintains in it. No other nation can have an interest in the maintenance of peace and in the existence of stable and just government in it equal to ours. Turbulence and revolution there involve our peace, embarrass our commerce, and entail upon us heavy expense in the observance and enforcement of our neutrality laws.

During the last thirty years insurrections have occurred in the island which the Spanish Government has been impotent to suppress, and devastating warfare has existed for many years. Each recurring insurrection apparently has been more determined and successful than the preceding one, and the Spanish authority has continued to diminish until it seems that the Crown is incapable of successfully reestablishing it in the island.

The war that has been waged has been in disregard of the universally recognized principles of modern warfare. The torch has laid waste the homes and property of innocent people not engaged in the struggle, and barbarities have been practiced which disgraced savagery. A fruitful island, susceptible of high development and the support of a prosperous nation, has been reduced in many places to a dreary waste; commerce has been destroyed, and the people driven from their homes to starvation and death. The world has witnessed a warfare without a counterpart in its bru-

talities and its destructiveness; and the moral sense of the civilized nations has been shocked and aroused as never before.

Our Government has neither coveted the island nor sought by force to control its administration. It has been our settled policy from an early period to permit no foreign interference with the Spanish authority over it. Our imperative demand has been that Cuba should fall under the sovereignty of no power other than Spain. We have repeatedly declared that we would not, without interference, see it pass to any other European power. This was clearly the policy embraced in the Monroe doctrine; and it was pointedly urged by Mr. Clay in 1823, in his note to Mr. Brown, when he said:

You will now add that we could not consent to the occupation of these islands (Cuba and Puerto Rico) by any other European power than Spanish under any contingency whatever.

This doctrine has never been modified; it has been repeatedly reiterated and reaffirmed. But for our opposition, England would undoubtedly have acquired the island when she desired to do so in 1823 and thereafter have established a government which would have relieved us from the disquiet that has prevailed, and the world would not have witnessed the horrors of Spanish rule at our very doors. Indeed, but for our attitude, other powers might have succeeded to the Spanish control and have established stable government in the Island of Cuba.

In view of our relations to the island and of our policy of opposition to foreign interference with Spanish control, we are morally bound to put an end to the wrongs, the outrages, the evils which flow from Spanish misrule.

We have repeatedly tendered to the Spanish cabinet our friendly offices to end the wars in Cuba and to restore peace. Our offers uniformly have been rejected. Many of the concessions we have demanded, however, have been granted to the insurgents. During the ten-years war slavery was abolished at our demand; autonomous government was proposed, in name, however, rather than in reality. The autonomy offered was in fact a sham, a delusion, for the grasp of Spain was in no essential degree relaxed.

This Government has at all times been scrupulously observant of her duties toward Spain, yet Spain has been either unwilling or unable to properly protect the rights of our citizens or to make

adequate reparation for the wrongs committed against them. They have been imprisoned without cause and tardily released without just reparation for the indignities and wrongs committed. The story is an old one, is already familiar as a thrice-told tale. History is but repeating itself.

When the present Administration succeeded to power, war existed in Cuba. An insurrection had broken out some time previously, which the Spanish authority was unable to subdue. Many American citizens were imprisoned and our commerce with the island was seriously embarrassed. Our authorities were vigilant in the apprehension and suppression of filibustering expeditions which were being organized on our shores.

Weyler was Captain-General of the island, and in the name of war had entered upon a system of extermination, had violated every recognized code of civilized warfare, and was fast bringing the island and its people to destruction.

Although confronted with questions of grave and serious moment at home, the Administration speedily addressed itself to the Cuban problem which has vexed our diplomacy and disturbed our tranquillity for so many years.

For many months the Chief Executive, upon whom rests, under the Constitution, the conduct of our foreign affairs, has been attempting to solve the Cuban problem peacefully and honorably. He has proceeded to its consideration with a broad and sympathetic statesmanship, and with a determination to enforce all the just demands we could make upon the Spanish authority, and with a purpose of defending, in the fullest degree, the national honor. The task imposed has been a grave and difficult one, and he has discharged it in a manner to challenge the admiration of his contemporaries and, in my opinion, to win the approval of dispassionate history.

His policy was an open one known to the world; it was peace with honor above and beyond all else, and war with honor only as the last dread emergency. If war was to come, it must come at such time as we would be able to meet it and in such manner as the whole world would approve. He truly comprehended the resources and patriotism of our people, and well knew that but one result would follow an appeal to the sword. He also knew

that nothing so became the mighty power of a great people as its sparing use.

Much has been accomplished by the Executive. Spanish prisons which contained many American citizens have been opened, and no American is in prison on Spanish soil; the rule of Weyler was closed by his withdrawal at the demand of this Government. His orders whereby noncombatants were driven from their fields and homes into cities and villages to starve and die have been rescinded. But the relief has come too late. Upward of 200,000 inoffensive citizens who never struck a blow at Spanish authority have perished—a harvest of death which only Spain could reap.

Thousands of others have been brought to the verge of destruction and are incapable of either returning to their desolated homes or existing until their crops can be grown if they were able to return. Through the appeals of the Executive, the American people have contributed liberally of their abundance, and ships have been loaded with food for the reconcentrados, and thousands have been saved by this merciful interposition who otherwise would have been lost.

Mr. President, upon the hands of the Spanish people is the blood not only of our own brave sailors but of over 200,000 of Spain's subjects; not of our race, it is true, but of fellow-beings created in the image of our Maker. This stain can not be washed away; it "will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine." Where in all history are there crimes so atrocious? The murders and atrocities in Cuba have been committed as near to our shores as Philadelphia is to New York. The continuance of the starvation of noncombatants as an adjunct of war within the shadow of our homes must result in our own debasement and demoralization. Spanish cruelty has no synonym in the human tongue.

But a few weeks ago the *Maine*, one of our war vessels, was sent to the harbor of Havana upon a mission of peace, for the protection of American interests, and not for war. Her going was but the resumption of old-time friendly relations. While the noble ship rested at peace in the harbor of Havana, while she was enjoying Spanish hospitality, she was destroyed, and most of her brave crew perished with her. When the blow came she was Spain's guest, which "was strong against the deed." The explosion

aroused our countrymen and shook the earth. It was the master tragedy of the age.

The report of our naval board charged with the duty of ascertaining the cause of the explosion found that it was primarily due to an external agency, but did not attempt to fix the responsibility upon any person or persons. The report was promptly transmitted to the Spanish Government, which has made answer of disavowal. This is not enough. Our country has been touched as by no other sorrow. Our countrymen, whose judgments are always just, have seriously and patiently sought the awful truth, desiring to acquit, not convict; they have weighed all the evidence, and no doubt remains in their minds that the massacre of our sailors, wearing the Federal uniform, was the foul work of Spanish treachery.

The evidence is ample to convict Spain. No unprejudiced jury in all Christendom would fail to render a verdict of guilty if Spain were an individual resting under indictment in a court of criminal jurisdiction. Her conduct, both before and after the fact, leaves no possible shadow of doubt. Whether the electric current was sent upon its mission of death by Spanish decree or by a Spanish functionary in Havana, we will not stop to inquire.

It is not for us to do so. The burden rests upon Spain. It was by the direct order of her military authorities that the *Maine* was anchored above a powerful, deadly, submarine mine. Was this accidental? Splendid sport, indeed! How chivalric! What a token of friendship and esteem! What a graceful courtesy! But it is said by Spain that we have not shown that she released the fatal spark. Be it so. It is not necessary. The primary cause was her act; we will not look beyond it. The original offense was hers. Nor are we obliged to stop to inquire whether the Spanish officers were negligent or exceeded their authority. If such a duty rests upon anyone, it does not rest upon us.

The finger of suspicion pointed strongly to Spain from the beginning, and events have strengthened suspicion into a conviction. Her perfunctory disavowal and sympathy were but cruel mockery. What think you would have been Great Britain's reply were the tragedy transferred to her waters? The cable would have been too slow to bear abundant testimony of her profound sympathy and complete disavowal and her purpose to hunt to the

death the fiendish perpetrators. Or what think you our sister Republic, France, or the German Empire, Russia, Italy, or Austria, or any other of the civilized governments with which we are at amity would have said or done?

They would each have avouched their sincere sympathy and made disavowal of any privity with the act and expressed their determination to rest only when the authors of it were brought to justice, and we would have believed them and the world would have believed them. But it was left to Spain, which has not fairly emerged from the night of the Middle Ages; to Spain, which has led the world in the invention of instruments of torture; to Spain, which to-day feeds its youth upon lessons of blood and suffering, to make reply and pursue a course which is inconsistent with a sense of absolute innocence. Guilt would fence; innocence would frankly disavow and lead in the search for those who did the deed. Innocence would show the blow was struck at both and would rest only when the authors of it were brought to justice.

Those who know best the Spanish character and the present frenzy of the Spanish mind are most convinced of Spanish guilt. To them no doubt remains.

Sir, the ghosts of the *Maine* will not down; they beckon us on. Would that they could tell the secrets of their "prison-house." Then we would know how, sleeping, the Spanish "serpent stung" them.

For this grave act Spain must make due amends.

But if it be granted that the guilt of Spain for this crime can not be fixed by the fair analysis of fact and law, yet she will not be held blameless from a moral standpoint. If her rule is so lax, her impotence so great, that she can not give protection to the lives and property of her friendly neighbors, she is no longer fit to rule; her sovereignty becomes a menace and friendly powers are insecure.

Our own tranquillity, our own sense of security, our regard for our present and future comfort and for the lives of her hapless and helpless subjects, demand that we should interpose the mighty power of this Government to stop the carnival of crime and suffering and restore peace in the Island of Cuba until some suitable government may be formed which shall be a guaranty to us and to the other nations of the earth that it will at all times in the

future be ready and willing and able to discharge its domestic and international obligations.

It is instinctive with us to desire to see people who are oppressed freed from the oppressor and secured in the God-given, inalienable privileges of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We desire and hope to see the independence of Cuba secured. Spain has, by every just consideration, by every standard of international duty, forever forfeited any right to further dominion over the Cuban people; and we hope to see established on the island a free and just government, endowed with functions for protecting the lives and property of the present and future generations who may dwell upon it.

But, Mr. President, I am not prepared at present to favor the recognition of the independence of the present so-called Republic of Cuba. We know but little about it. It is too nebulous, too mythical, to be invited into the family of nations by our potential act. The present so-called government, at most, is a military oligarchy with no habitat, with no well-defined governmental organism exercising the functions of a republic; and if we were to recognize its independence under the present pressure without adequate knowledge or information, it might lead to the establishment of a power upon the island which would prove vexatious and hurtful to us, and our second estate might be as bad or worse than our first, or at least we might continue to be seriously menaced and disturbed by it.

There are, doubtless, among the citizens of the island those capable of forming and establishing a government which will be stable and secure and which will be a guaranty that the Cuban question is settled for all time to come. It seems to me, therefore, that the first imperative duty resting upon us is to establish tranquillity in the island, relieve the suffering and distressed, and then enable the citizens of the island to deliberate and form a government upon such lines as their highest and best interests may require.

It may be that the present pretended republic is expressive of the highest and best thought of the island, and that its recognition will be found to be in the best interest of all concerned. If this be so, time will demonstrate it. We should not forget that

the ultimate decision is in our hands; that justice will not miscarry; delay will not defeat her righteous demands.

The air is too full of rumors as to the character of the present so-called Cuban Republic and as to the bonds that have been floated in its name in this country and said to be in the hands of speculators, to justify us in any hasty act of recognition.

We have had introduced here by the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts [Mr. HOAR] the weighty testimony of Clara Barton, a veritable angel of mercy, entirely disinterested, with no motive on God's earth except in the interest of humanity, and her testimony is against the recognition of the independence of the present so-called Cuban Republic. Who knows better than she? Do the distinguished Senators who advocate immediate recognition? For my part, I will accept the intelligent, disinterested testimony of Clara Barton.

Mr. President, we have been educated to the doctrine in this country that the majority shall rule. If it shall be demonstrated that the present so-called republic is fairly representative of the majority of the citizens of Cuba, I would gladly and quickly vote to recognize its authority. If it represents a majority, and we compel peace, it should have no difficulty in convincing us of the fact, and that it is entitled to rule, and to recognition.

Sir, no one will distrust our motives in taking this step. We do not intervene for revenge, for the acquisition of territory, for the extension of our authority and power. Our past history is ample proof of this. Spain has long overtaxed the generous forbearance of our people. We have suffered wrongs which would have justified a nation actuated by less exalted motives than we to have struck in revenge. Ample opportunity has heretofore occurred for the seizure of the island by force if we had been eager to extend our dominion. Mr. President, the world will acquit us of any base desire. The misgovernment of Cuba has become so flagrant, the barbarism, the wrongs, the outrages there have so offended the civilized world that we must intervene for and in the name of humanity. No higher motive can actuate any government.

Mr. President, I am aware, as was well said by the distinguished Senator from Delaware [Mr. GRAY] this afternoon, that

intervention in the domestic affairs of another power is a matter of delicacy, and should be attempted only where the necessity is clear and where it is demanded by grave exigency. Such necessity exists here, surely, indisputably.

There are those who insist that before intervening we should recognize the independence of the republic which is said to have been organized and maintained in the island. It is urged, among other things, that recognition should occur in order that we may not become liable to the holders of certain Spanish bonds said to have been issued under a pledge of the revenues of Cuba for the payment of the accruing interest thereon. It is argued that intervention without recognition would impose upon us a liability which may be avoided by recognition. I must wholly dissent from the soundness of this proposition. There is not one precedent, so far as I am aware, which supports the contention.

Let us briefly see what the opposing position is. If I understand correctly, it is: That we shall first recognize the independence of the present Cuban Republic and then intervene with force to sustain it; while the opposite contention is that we shall intervene with force and then acknowledge the independence of the present republic, if, when in possession of adequate information, its recognition is proper; and if it is not a proper government to recognize, then that we shall recognize some republic which the patriots of Cuba may deliberately form. Such is the divergence of our views, though we are seeking to attain the same end.

Is there subtlety enough here to measure the difference in our obligations—our international liabilities under these two methods? Mr. President, I am free to confess that I am unable to see why our ultimate responsibility would not be the same in the one case as in the other. The final end is the same, though the processes are slightly different. It seems to me that the substance of our act must control, and not the mere form. Haste, sir, in this vital matter is not of the essence of the situation; correct conclusions, sound and stable results should be our sole and only aim.

But, Mr. President, no liability will rest upon us whichever method we pursue. Spain has, by her course, which it is unnecessary to review in this connection, forfeited her right to further dominion over Cuba or its revenues. If the revenues were ever

pledged to the satisfaction of a series of Spanish bonds, such pledge was necessarily subject to the forfeiture of the island for the violation of those humane principles and precepts which are observed by the civilized nations of the earth.

Sir, the rights of humanity are superior to the rights of bondholders. We violate neither the law of nations nor incur the burdens which rest upon Spain by our act of recognition either before or after intervention. If our act is warranted by the considerations of humanity, no bondholder can be heard to complain.

When the bonds were taken under a specific pledge, they were taken upon the implied understanding that the pledgeor would observe its international obligations according to the standard of civilized nations. The bondholder was presumed to know that a violation of those obligations would work a forfeiture of the estate and the dispossession of the sovereignty of the obligor. The bonds, sir, were taken subject to a condition, and that condition was the proper observance and practice of the rules of humanity, the faithful discharge of international duties. The condition, sir, has been broken.

We are at the beginning of a new epoch in our history. No graver emergency ever confronted us than the one which faces us at this hour. Peace is about to be abdicated for a policy which may lead to war. War, if it comes, will have been forced upon us by the misgovernment, the insolence, the cruelty of Spain. Spain has too long presumed upon our good nature. She has too long offended against the sense of justice of our people. Her desultory, guerrilla-like, barbarous warfare upon her subjects in Cuba, upon American citizens and American commerce, has been in effect a war upon us.

The concessions she has made toward a modification of her iron and harsh rule have been made but to be broken. Her diplomacy has been characterized by subtlety, insincerity, and insult, until our countrymen have lost faith in her professions, confidence in her stability and fitness to rule. All sense of security and safety to our citizens and their commercial interests in Cuba is forever destroyed so long as Spanish sovereignty is maintained there. The highest dictates of national interest and humanity require that the war which is waged in Cuba should be stopped by force of arms, all other means of a pacific nature failing.

We need make no apology for the deliberation and delay in making this last appeal, for no self-respecting nation could afford to do less than exhaust to the fullest degree the resources of diplomacy before a resort to arms. If some delay has occurred while the powers concerned, have attempted to effect a peaceful and honorable conclusion, and war comes, we can have the consolation of the reflection that sorrow has been delayed in countless households throughout the land. Thousands of patriotic boys above and before whom stands the bow of promise have been ready to lay down their lives if diplomacy failed. If there has been seeming delay in calling them to arms their soon to be desolated homes will not complain.

We strike not in anger, not for mere revenge, not for the extension of our sovereignty, but in defense of our rights and in discharge of our duty divinely imposed.

Mr. President, I had profoundly hoped until recently that war could be averted. We have patiently witnessed the effort of the Chief Executive to attain an honorable and peaceful solution of the grave problem.

The conservative, patriotic people of the country have been profoundly impressed by his statesmanship, his tenacity of purpose, and the ability and force with which he has pressed the consideration of our just demands and rights upon the attention of the Spanish Government. We have had full faith and confidence in his courage and patriotic purpose and desired that he should exhaust every honorable means to avert war before it should be invited or declared.

We have desired, moreover, that he should be given opportunity to make that preparation which is necessary to meet so grave an emergency. With the foresight of true statesmanship—and I would that the Senator from Washington [Mr. TURNER] were in his seat, that he might hear what I say—he has negotiated for peace with one hand while preparing by day and by night for war with the other. When he took the oath of his high office, our country was not prepared to engage in war. Conscious of our isolation, and disarmed by long years of peace, we were illy fitted to engage in war with any power. Our seaport cities were inadequately protected.

Our marine force, while of high quality, was entirely insufficient in quantity. While this fact was generally recognized by those who had given intelligent consideration to the subject, it was unknown to many of our countrymen, who were insistent upon immediate measures which would instantly precipitate war. They were doubtless unadvised as to whether we had ample coast defenses to resist foreign attack, as to whether we had an ample fleet, or as to whether we had ammunition sufficient for one battle.

Mr. President, I confess I have come to the conclusion to which I have arrived after much deliberation—reluctantly and with profound regret. I have hoped and prayed that this great emergency might be honorably averted or avoided. My hesitancy did not grow out of any doubt as to the patriotism or the power of my country. It was due to no possible doubt as to the result of the issue, but to the fact that I have felt that even Spain, cruel and merciless as she has been, would not be wholly dead to our righteous and firm appeals.

Nearly one year ago I expressed myself in this Chamber in favor of extending our friendly offices to Spain in aid of a settlement of the war in Cuba, indulging the hope that pacific efforts would accomplish the desired end and also expressing the conviction that if all else failed, this Government should reach out its strong arm and command peace. Sir, all reasonable, peaceable means have been employed by the Chief Executive, earnestly, intelligently, and patriotically.

All efforts at amicable solution have failed, and all that remains is to invoke the mighty power of this Government in behalf of enduring peace and imperiled humanity. We shall now have the satisfaction of knowing that, come what may in the lottery of war, we have left undone nothing which could be done consistently with honor to secure a pacific settlement. The Spanish flag must be withdrawn and cease forever to contaminate the air of this hemisphere. To the high and holy cause of humanity and the vindication of our national honor we dedicate the lives and fortune of the Republic.

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